14 supplements you should NEVER take – updated! (part two)

Last week, I gave you the first seven supplements you should never take – products that I feel are overhyped, under-researched, or downright dangerous. This week, I'm continuing on that topic with even more supplements to watch out for.

Take a look at the rest of the list below, and then kick these duds to the curb.

8) Human Growth Hormone (HGH) enhancers: These are wrong on 2 counts. First, it's never been clearly established that these pricey supplements, consisting of amino acids like L-arginine, actually increase levels of HGH.

Even if they were to do so, it is by no means clear that raising HGH in adults is beneficial. Adults receiving expensive shots that really do raise HGH obtain transient improvements in appearance and well-being, but side effects like carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis are common, and there's the real concern that HGH's growth-promoting effects might accelerate cancer growth.

Worse yet, researchers now suspect that unnecessary injections of this "anti-aging" elixir may curtail longevity, not extend it.

9) Cheap "One-a-Day" supplements: Typically, to cram small amounts of all the essential vitamins and minerals into a single small tablet requires considerable "triage." Magnesium and calcium are particularly bulky, so only small fractions of the Recommended Daily Intake make their way in.

Besides, there's a price-point to match, so only the cheapest, mass-produced, synthetic raw materials are used. Then, artificial colorings, binders, and excipients are added, and shiny waxes are applied to polish the pill surfaces.

Opt for a higher quality multi that may require 4 or even 6 pills to deliver a more complete blend of high-quality, full-spectrum, natural, bio-available nutrients.

10) "Intestinal Cleanse" products: These are little more than tarted-up laxatives, often containing harmful, habit-forming ingredients like cascara sagrada. They can cause laxative dependency, and irreversible dark pigmentation of the colon walls. Sometimes, in susceptible individuals, they reinforce bulimic cycles of binging and purging.

11) "Gluten-Aid" products: "You can have your cake and eat it, too" goes the old saying. That's what these products promise to gluten-sensitive individuals. They supposedly act by "digesting" gliadin proteins before they trigger intolerance and auto-immunity. But there's no real evidence that they mitigate even mild gluten intolerance, and there's the very real danger that they might give a false sense of security to individuals with full-blown celiac disease who might do themselves irreparable harm by consuming even tiny, occasional amounts of gluten.

If you have true gluten intolerance or celiac disease, it's wishful thinking that there's an antidote to gluten consumption.

12) Caffeine pills: There's plenty of caffeine in coffee or tea, and you get beneficial polyphenol compounds via nature's natural delivery systems. No question caffeine promotes alertness and athletic performance, but…

Putting caffeine in pills makes it too easy to spike blood pressure, trigger palpitations, stoke anxiety, and override the body's sleep needs. Besides, caffeine is addictive and withdrawal is a bitch. And caffeine tempts us to overdraw our energy bank accounts. True energy is not built on a shaky foundation that is jacked-up with stimulants.

13) "Miracle" weight loss supplements: With names like JetFuel T-300, MX-LS7, Aro Black Series Burn, Black Widow, Dexaprine XR, Fastin-XR, Lipodrene Hardcore, Lipodrene Xtreme, Stimerex-ES and Yellow Scorpion, small wonder that these products may be Trojan horses for potentially-dangerous chemical ingredients. Recently, major chain retailers have come under fire for offering these pills to unwary consumers.

Lately in the crosshairs is BMPEA, a "natural" derivative of a Southwest plant, acacia rigidula, which enables it to skirt regulations about synthetic drug additives. Like its predecessor, DMAA, which was recently removed from the market, BMPEA has dangerous amphetamine-like effects, including palpitations, high blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety and may have resulted in ER visits, poisoning the well for responsible supplement manufacturers.

14) Sexual enhancers: These sometimes contain hidden amounts of pharmaceutical drugs. In my opinion, pills marketed to stoke your mojo are mostly a waste of time. While saw palmetto or beta-sitosterol might help keep your prostate from enlarging, there is NO evidence that they'll make you sexier. The best way to a healthier sex life is through a holistic approach addressing diet, sleep, exercise, and psychological well-being, with expert medical guidance if you need bio-identical hormone replacement therapy. If all else fails, it's no crime to jumpstart your sex life with a prescription drug—at least you know what you're getting.

Arginine, citrulline, ginseng, maca, DHEA, and beet extract are mild sexual enhancers, but many OTC ED pills are illegally spiked with unspecified amounts of actual drugs like Viagra, Cialis, or Levitra. Trouble is, you'll never know how much you're getting, or if there are dangerous stimulants lurking within—the recent tragic case of Lamar Odom is a cautionary tale about the consequences of taking too much "herbal Viagra."

I hope you take this advice to heart and ditch these subpar supplements from your cabinets. Opt instead for supplements with a proven track record of efficacy, from a reputable source.